

The [Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs](#) is focused on aiding and assisting Hoosier veterans and qualified family members or survivors who are eligible for benefits or advantages provided by Indiana and the U.S. government.

Indiana has always had a proud legacy of veterans willing to serve their country – and we have a great team in place at IDVA to serve to you.

Here are a few important facts:

The Governor's biennial budget (highlights [here](#)), which was signed May 7, included significant new resources in the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs' efforts to serve Hoosier veterans.

The budget increases funding to:

- ✓ The Indiana Women's Veterans Program
- ✓ Essential technology upgrades
- ✓ Staffing support (hiring more staff to help provide services our veterans)
- ✓ Improved State and County Veteran Service Officer (CVSO) training and support for improved IDVA outreach to connect veterans with benefits
- ✓ Educational opportunities, employment, training and care

The budget for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017 **more than doubles existing funding for the IDVA** to improve staffing to better help those who have served our country. Because of this, IDVA is hiring additional state service officers to complement CVSOs and fill in any gaps in service for Hoosier veterans seeking assistance in employment and benefits.

Governor Mike Pence on Tuesday, May 5, 2015, signed [SEA 298](#), the [Voluntary Veterans' Preference Employment Policy](#), **which allows private employers to give preference to veterans** as verified by the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, in the hiring, promoting or retaining of qualified applicants or employees. The bill passed the House and Senate with unanimous and bipartisan support.

**IDVA is holding eleven [Community Outreach Events](#) throughout the state this year** where the staff takes its show on the road and offers "one-stop shopping" opportunities for veterans, active duty members and their dependents. At these events, participants can connect with needed services, learn how to develop a resume, receive interview preparation guidance, introduce themselves to prospective employers and meet with Indiana Women's Veteran Coordinator Laura McKee, a United States Air Force veteran.

Governor Pence in 2014 signed into law the unanimously passed [SEA 354](#), which established the Hoosier Women Veterans Program to serve the needs of the more than 33,000 women veterans in Indiana.

**Governor Pence [announced](#) on January 12, 2015, that the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs hired Senior Master Sergeant Laura McKee as Indiana's Women Veteran Coordinator.** McKee will be at each of the previously mentioned Community Outreach events to discuss issues with female veterans.

At various Outreach events and through its employment services, **IDVA has helped connect more than 1,000 veterans seeking employment with full-time, good-paying jobs in just the past year.**

We will be announcing many more Veteran Community Outreach Events in the next 18 months along with Veterans Rallies at cities throughout Indiana. In 2016, when Indiana observes its [Bicentennial](#), many communities will be hosting festivals related to Indiana's celebration of 200 years of Statehood. We will post on a Calendar (soon to be online on this website) the locations and dates where you can find our booth and staff at select events.

On his first day in office, January 14, 2013, Governor Pence signed [Executive Order 13-04](#), establishing a **3% contracting goal for Indiana Veteran Owned Businesses**. That Executive Order was codified by the General Assembly via [Senate Enrolled Act 564](#), which put the goal into statute. The most recent data (July 2013 through September 2014) reflects a commitment of more than **5%** to Indiana Veteran Owned Businesses.

During the First Regular Session of the 118<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2013), Governor Pence signed into law [House Enrolled Act 1387](#), a bill designed to improve the services Hoosier Veterans receive from County Veteran Service Officers (CVSOs). HEA 1387 requires that CVSOs attend a course and become accredited to represent veterans. **Accreditation training and certification better enables these service officers to advocate on behalf of Hoosier Veterans**. The legislation also creates a grant program to reimburse counties for training expenses, computer equipment and software.

We now have 71 accredited CVSO's with 21 new or pending applications for approval. This means that 79% of Indiana counties now have accredited CVSO's. We are also at 70+ VetraSpec Claims management accounts assigned, improving the overall processing of claims. Further, almost half of the counties have utilized the funds to upgrade or purchase needed computer equipment.

In addition, IDVA is progressing consistently at improving dollar expenditures to our veterans. The results of [House Enrolled Act 1387](#) are reflected in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Geographic Distribution of Expenditures (GDX) report indicating total expenditures to Indiana Veterans from \$1.9Bil in FY 11, \$2.0Bil in FY12, \$2.47Bil in FY13, to \$2.66Bil in FY14. **(That is an increase of \$685 Million per year to Hoosier Veterans from FY11 to FY14!!)** The GDX report also indicates Indiana improved in national ranking from 48<sup>th</sup> to 43<sup>rd</sup> during that same period which directly demonstrates the success of HEA 1387.

IDVA administers the Military Family Relief Fund for the families of deployed or formerly deployed Indiana National Guard members and members of the Selected Reserves. All military members and veterans that served on, or, after September 11, 2001 may be eligible to receive a onetime emergency grant. The emergency grants may be used by the families for needs such as food, housing, utilities, medical services, transportation and other essential family support expenses which have become difficult to afford. Grants up to \$2,500 may be awarded. IDVA has distributed **over \$ 1.2 million** to needy Veterans and families in FY 2015.

We are pleased to announce **we are now also offering additional assistance to veterans and family members in need of counseling, employment and training services** thanks to a \$2 million [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#) (TANF) grant that will pay for these services.

Also, Indiana works hard to take care of its homeless veterans who seek assistance. We know that many who have received help have told others in need that if anyone needs aid, they should go to Indianapolis, because this is a place that takes care of its veterans.

IDVA manages the Indiana Veterans' Home in West Lafayette, IN. In 2013 the Home was rated a 2 Star facility by Nursing Home Compare (Medicare/Medicaid). We are pleased to announce that in June 2015 Nursing Home Compare has rated the **Indiana Veterans' Home as a 5 Star facility** further indicating we are committed to serving our Veterans in the best possible way.

As most people know, the health side of veteran services is administered on the federal level by the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#). At this time, there are 23 VISN's in the country (VISN -Veterans Integrated Service Networks) – and Indiana is partitioned into FIVE (5) different VISN's. Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs has worked with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, as they reorganize the VISN's, resulting in Indiana being assigned into only ONE (1) VISN. We understand this reorganization should provide more convenient access to health services for our Veterans and clarity to its administration.

All of these positive actions are examples of the ways in which we are working every single day to help our veterans.

We are so very proud of all of our veterans for their service and sacrifice. We know it's because they love this Country and believe in the cause of Liberty.

Please let us know how we can help you, and we thank you most sincerely for your service.

-James Brown  
Director, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs